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Annual ministerial review: implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to global public health

Statement submitted by Korea Institute of Brain Science, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2009/100.

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Statement*

The role of brain education in global mental health

At a preparatory meeting on 8 January 2009 held in United Nations Headquarters in New York, discussions focused on the « Role of Brain Education in Global Mental Health in achieving the Millennium Development Goals ». About 100 participants attended the meeting, co-sponsored by the Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations (CONGO) Committee on Mental Health, the International Brain Education Association, Korea Institute of Brain Science (KIBS), and the NGO section of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA).

The importance of overall health- that comprises both physical and mental health- is predicated on the notion that health is a right and not a privilege. An individual's mental health status determines the individual's propensity for making positive choices in life. The highly complex interrelationship between physical and mental health also affects decisions regarding treatment options. The problem is particularly acute for those living in poverty since they neither have the financial means to seek help nor do they have access to treatment options.

Concerted effort among agencies, partners and mental health professionals is required to confront this complicated issue. A holistic approach should be considered and efforts should be made to make the right to basic health care a global public good. Addressing the health crisis will require a collective effort and facilitate the accomplishment of the internationally agreed-upon development goals by 2015.

Brain Education is an approach that focuses on improving health through better use of the brain. The value of Brain Education was most recently recognized when New York City designated a "Brain Education Day." Since 1990, Brain Education programs in schools, communities, services for the elderly, correctional facilities, military service, healthcare and work settings have reported success in promoting healthy lifestyles and public mental health. Recommendations to ECOSOC:

- To spread global awareness and increase efforts to convey the importance of the brain as fundamental to human life and essential to a higher quality of life and greater productivity in the work environment. The future of humanity lies in how we understand and use our brain.

- To mobilize international support for mental health issues in developing countries, which are often associated with poverty and marginalization, genetic vulnerabilities, illness, natural disasters, prolonged conflict , and where neither the diagnosis nor the treatment of mental health receives adequate attention largely due to lack of resources.

* Issued without formal editing.

- To promote Brain Education methods such as brainwave vibration and cognitive training, which are based on principles of health and on the ability of the brain to change, a concept known as neuroplasticity. These methods are a way to tap into the brain's potential and positively influence the way it functions so as to promote physical well-being, enhance learning skills, and cope with stress.

- To initiate a Global movement for creating mental well-being for all through better utilization of the brain in order to achieve global health.